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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN SUDAN - USAID WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE
SECTOR ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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Summary

¶1. (U) To facilitate the development of a USAID water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) strategy for FY 2007, USAID/Sudan and USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) staff recently assessed USAID-funded WASH interventions in Southern Sudan.

The assessment team reported that USAID WASH programs have increased access to water points; however, some emergency drinking water interventions have proven difficult to maintain. Without a standardized Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) water policy in place, many investments in the water sector will not be sustainable.

End summary.

Background

¶2. (U) From February 2 to 18, a USAID/OFDA technical advisor and a USAID/OFDA Southern Sudan program manager traveled to Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Lakes states to evaluate the effectiveness of USAID WASH programs in providing essential WASH services and mitigating local conflict over water resources. The team met with USAID partners and state and local officials in rural towns and potential returnee locations. Since FY 2002 USAID/OFDA has provided more than USD 41 million for WASH programs in Southern Sudan. The USAID team traveled with technical experts from PACT, Inc., USAID/OFDA's largest WASH implementing partner in Southern Sudan. Expectations for lasting peace and development are high in Southern Sudan and significant numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from within Sudan, predominately from the Khartoum area, and refugees from neighboring countries have begun returning to the region.

WASH Sector Confronts Challenges

¶3. (U) To date, limited international donor development assistance has focused on the water sector. International and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have approached WASH programming from a relief perspective and with limited coordination. In FY 2005, USAID/OFDA shifted from directly funding multiple NGO water partners to

supporting a limited number of organizations to implement multiple projects under a more coordinated management structure. This has yielded positive results at the local level increasing the number of new and rehabilitated water points. However, the limited capacity of newly formed Southern Sudanese government structures, the absence of a GOSS water policy to govern payment fees and the management of water points, and the undefined roles of the private and public sectors in water service delivery are significant challenges to improving and sustaining safe water services.

¶4. (U) Some emergency drinking water interventions in Southern Sudan, including hand pumps and motorized and solar pump systems, have proven difficult to maintain. Village water committees, cost-recovery mechanisms, and localized spare parts warehousing systems have had varying success, and overall uncertainty regarding management and ownership responsibilities has undermined water service quality and maintenance in some areas. To facilitate Southern Sudan's transition from emergency assistance to long-term development, a reduced dependence on outside donor funding and an increased role for regional, state, and county governments, as well as the private sector is needed. A strong GOSS water policy to assist management capacity at all government levels, including GOSS, state, and county levels would enhance efforts to increase the sustainability of water sector interventions. USAID understands that the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) is supporting this process by funding the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children/UK, and the Overseas Development Institute to work with the GOSS Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation and the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development to draft a GOSS Regional Water Policy.

¶5. (U) The major USAID/OFDA water partners, including PACT, have focused primarily on drilling and water point management to meet emergency safe water needs. Hygiene and sanitation programs that include water storage practices and behavioral aspects, such as hand washing and safe latrine usage, are increasing and should continue to be encouraged. As returnees settle and community populations increase, hygiene promotion and sanitation interventions at the

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household level will be critical for better health.

¶6. (U) USAID/OFDA's water conflict-mitigation strategy, which includes rain catchment systems to reduce tensions surrounding water access among pastoralists, has yielded mixed results. Rain catchment projects for livestock water points have worked well in northern Sudan. However, the practice of employing local labor has had less success in many parts of the south primarily due to soil structure, which is less suitable for manual labor. USAID/OFDA believes a mechanized approach may be more appropriate for project sites in southern regions.

Comment: Recommendations

¶7. (U) USAID should use its influence with other donors, U.N. agencies, and international NGOs already engaged in supporting the development of a GOSS water policy to ensure that the policy defines roles and responsibilities of the different GOSS ministries and offices at regional, state, and county levels. A sound GOSS regional water policy would facilitate the integration of existing infrastructure and the coordination of current and future projects.

¶8. (U) USAID/OFDA should continue to invest in safe water activities with immediate impact in areas of high returns. Emphasis on low cost, sustainable water provision, including hand-dug wells where possible, and the protection of natural water sources should be encouraged. This is particularly important in light of the expected increase in the number of returnees over the next two years. The USAID team visited a number of locally constructed, rural, hand-dug wells that represented a practical and sustainable approach to increase safe water access that could serve as models for future projects.

¶9. (U) USAID WASH investments in the installation of new boreholes equipped with hand pumps or motorized and solar pump systems should be pursued to enhance safe water access when drawing from deep aquifers or serving large populations.

¶10. (U) As returns increase, hygiene promotion activities and low cost sanitation infrastructure programs should play a prominent role in USAID WASH programming and should include interventions at the household level.

¶11. (U) In collaboration with all levels of government, USAID should continue to support rainwater catchment projects that provide water for cattle in seasonally dry zones to reduce conflict among pastoralists.

¶12. (U) USAID/OFDA will continue to work with USAID/Sudan to explore possibilities for further coordination and transition in the WASH sector.

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